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Gandhi Marg Quarterly
46(3): 371–384
© 2025 Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi
http://gandhimargjournal.org/
ISSN 0016—4437

Book Reviews

Lal, V. (Ed.). (2025). *Gandhi, Truth, and Nonviolence: The Politics of Engagement in Post-Truth Times*. Oxford University Press. pp.xiii+360. £99.00(11,253.59 Indian Rupees)

IT CAN BE metaphorically said, as the tittle of this review indicates , that Gandhi balanced his philosophy of life by holding Truth (Satya) in one hand and Nonviolence (*Ahimsa*) in the other, maintaining a harmonious equilibrium between the two without ever letting go of either. Both principles form the twin pillars of his thought and can be explored at length from diverse theoretical as well as practical perspectives. Nearly every other concept central to Gandhian thought—such as *Swaraj* (self-rule), *Satyagraha* (truth-force),Trusteeship(*Nyâsitâ*), and his educational thoughts (Nai Talim)—can be traced back to this foundational ethical core of Truth and Nonviolence. This is especially evident when we consider Gandhi's metaphysical, axiological, and religious standpoints, which permeate his writings and actions. In other words , Gandhi was not only a philosopher but also a socio-political reformer who underwent several paradigms shifts in his worldview. One of the most notable was his transition from the belief that "God is Truth" to the realization that "Truth is God"—a shift that encapsulates his evolving spiritual and moral insights. Armed with this philosophical clarity, Gandhi confronted numerous injustices throughout his life, whether it was the racial discrimination he and other faced in South Africa or the broader structures of colonialism in South Asia, particularly in India.

The above narrative may sound ideal—and perhaps even overly idealistic—to revisit concepts like Truth and Nonviolence in today's world. Yet, there is a growing and urgent need to do exactly that. One key reason lies in the evolving nature of cultures and civilizations, which are simultaneously becoming more interconnected through media and technology, and yet increasingly fragmented due to geopolitical tensions, identity politics, and cultural polarization. To

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put it simply, if there is any ideology that haunts our times, it is the ideology of the post-truth era. Post-truth does not just signify a casual indifference to facts—it represents the extreme culmination of various intellectual trends, including radical postmodernism, anti-foundationalism, and deep skepticism. This normative erosion is not just philosophical; it is existential. When Truth becomes relative or irrelevant, the entire structure of human civilization—indeed, the very environment we depend on—is put at risk. Without a shared commitment to some version of truth and a nonviolent mode of coexistence, dialogue becomes impossible, communities fall apart, and ethical responsibility fades. This is precisely why returning to Gandhian ideals is not merely a nostalgic exercise but a vital philosophical and ethical task. Gandhi's emphasis on Truth and Nonviolence offers a counter-narrative to the cynicism of the post-truth age—a call to rebuild our world on the basis of sincerity, compassion, and moral courage.

If the post-truth crisis truly represents a pressing global challenge—which it undoubtedly does for the well-being of humanity—then the volume *Gandhi, Truth, and Nonviolence: The Politics of Engagement in Post-Truth Times*, edited by Vinay Lal and currently under review, merits serious attention and reflection. Featuring essays by renowned scholars, the book offers a rich and multifaceted examination of Gandhi's complex legacy, positioning him not as a distant icon but as a radical moral thinker whose vision remains urgently relevant today when wars and attacks on civilians has become an everyday practice. It challenges conventional understandings of Gandhi, highlighting his ethical courage, political fearlessness, and yogic discipline, while also exploring his influence on global movements, including the American civil rights struggle. Among its standout contributions is a rare and insightful interview with civil rights leader Rev. James Lawson. The compilation distinguishes itself from other Gandhi collections by prioritizing the depth of his ethical vision over surface-level debates about his relevance. It examines Gandhi's critiques of political logic, his notions of community and political solidarity, his legal work in South Africa, his conversations with Tagore, his enduring relevance in movements like the anti-Citizenship Amendment Act protests in India among many other intriguing normative topics. The volume is structured as a curated collection of thirteen essays and an introduction, each exploring distinct yet interrelated dimensions of Gandhi's ethical, political, and philosophical thought—from his critique of political rationality and aesthetic sensibility to his global influence, spiritual discipline, and historical dialogues—offering both thematic depth and geographical

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breadth.

In the introduction *The Measure of a Man: The Many Enigmas and Strange Journeys of Mohandas Gandhi*, Vinay Lal offers a bold, iconoclastic meditation on the many enigmas surrounding Gandhi, resisting the tired question of his "relevance" and instead positioning Gandhi as a necessary provocation—someone who unsettles, disturbs, and refuses easy assimilation(p.1). Lal is concerned by the fact that despite thousands of biographies and scholarly works, Gandhi remains elusive, often forgotten even as his statues dot the Indian landscape, their visibility paradoxically marking cultural amnesia. He critiques the state's performative reverence of Gandhi, noting how those in power both appropriate and erase his legacy, and draws sharp attention to contemporary India's disavowal of Gandhi in favor of more militant, masculine nationalist figures. Situating Gandhi not as a saint or mere icon of peace, but as a radical ethical force who stands in quiet but firm opposition to violence, authoritarianism, and conformity, Lal's introduction challenges readers and set the tone for the whole volume to take the measure of Gandhi not through homage but through honest reckoning with his unsettling moral and political vision(p.11). Furthermore, in Lal's view, Gandhi's resistance to religious conversion should not be conflated with Hindu chauvinism; rather, it reflects his deep ethical commitment to the sovereignty of individual conscience. Lal emphasizes that Gandhi's position evolved over time and was grounded in the belief that all religions offer the resources for ethical living. For Gandhi, as Lal argues, true conversion had to pass the "litmus test of conscience" and emerge from a sincere, informed spiritual quest, requiring the sacrifice of one's ego and selfishness in any form, whether individual, cultural, or otherwise(pp.21-22).

Following the introduction, the volume opens with its first chapter, In the *Topography of Nonviolence*, where Faisal Devji reexamines Gandhi's anti-colonial vision, challenging his reduction to a territorial icon of India by emphasizing his global engagement with the British Empire's maritime power(p.23). Devji argues that Gandhi recognized colonialism's reliance on the interplay between land (as a realm of legal particularity) and sea (symbolizing imperial universality through trade, law, and humanitarianism). By analyzing Gandhi's three transformative sea voyages and strategies like the famous Salt March, Devji illustrates how Gandhi sought to dismantle this duality, critiquing state-centric nationalism and "modern civilization" while reimagining freedom through nonviolent resistance. Contrasting Gandhi with figures like Nehru and drawing on Carl Schmitt's geopolitical theories, Devji highlights Gandhi's unique synthesis of moral practice—dietary and sexual discipline(p.30), decentralized governance—and his

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metaphor of an "oceanic circle" of egalitarian communities, transcending imperial hierarchies to unite land and sea in a vision of ethical universality beyond state violence(pp.42-43).

Chapter 2, *A Different Vision: Gandhi's Critique of Political Rationality*, features Uday Singh Mehta challenging conventional interpretations of Gandhi as a primarily political thinker, arguing that his life and work were fundamentally oriented toward spiritual goals—self-realization, seeing God, and attaining moksha(p.44). Mehta contends that Gandhi's politics were inseparable from his ethical and metaphysical vision, which rejected modern political rationality's fixation on state power, security, and sovereignty. Unlike Hobbesian frameworks that prioritize self-preservation and fear of anarchy, Gandhi centered social practices (family, religion, community) and virtues like courage, patience, and nonviolent integrity, explored at length by Mehta , as pathways to ethical selfhood(p.44-55). For Gandhi, toleration emerged organically from India's civilizational pluralism rather than state-enforced secularism; courage meant individual readiness to suffer for truth; and patience reflected a rejection of modernity's rush toward abstraction and vicarious living. Mehta emphasizes Gandhi's critique of imperialism and modernity as distortions of relational ethics, advocating instead for a "religious soil" rooted in scriptural introspection and coexistence. By subordinating politics to spirituality, like a typical Neo-Vedantin of his time, Gandhi reimagined freedom as a slow, inward transformation, resisting state-centric solutions and embracing anarchy as preferable to coercive order.[1] Mehta's analysis reveals Gandhi's radical idealism: a vision where social harmony and self-realization transcend the logics of power, progress, and nation-state imperatives(p.58).

Now shifting the discourse toward a more practical register, the challenge of truly loving one's neighbor—especially beyond the bounds of kinship, community, or even species—has long been regarded as an impossible demand in political and ethical thought. Christianity took this ideal seriously, making it a prerequisite of religious life, and Gandhi was notably influenced by this aspect. Yet many thinkers, including Freud and Dostoevsky, dismissed it as unrealistic or psychologically untenable(p.60). In fact, dominant Western political ideologies—whether liberalism or Marxism—have fragmented this vision of unity(Rajan,2024).[2] Yet Gandhi, as Ajay Skaria shows in Chapter 3, *Along the Way to Gandhi's Neighbour*, radically reimagines this biblical injunction as central to his philosophy of nonviolence and equality(p.59). Skaria argues that Gandhi transforms the neighbor into a quasi-universal figure of boundless care(p.65), drawing from the Bhagavad Gita and *bhakti* traditions to reject

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sovereignty-centered models of equality in favor of an "equality of the minor"—an inclusive embrace of all beings through self-surrender (tyaag). This vision challenges modern frameworks of rights and power, offering instead a radical democracy rooted in ethical practices rather than state institutions. By blending Pauline neighborliness with Hindu pluralism, Gandhi proposes a fragile but transformative ideal of justice that transcends caste, imperialism, and anthropocentrism.

In her chapter *Historical Memory and American Nonviolence: Recovering the Radical Roots and Vision of the 'American Gandhi' A. J. Muste*, Leilah Danielson recovers the legacy of A.J. Muste, the "American Gandhi," a radical minister who fused Gandhian principles with U.S. activism. Muste, a Calvinist-turned-socialist pacifist, pioneered nonviolent resistance to war, imperialism, and racism, working with figures like J.P. Narayan through the World Peace Brigade(WPB)(p.89). Danielson argues that Muste's erasure from history reflects discomfort with his anti-statism, religious roots, and revolutionary socialism. Although the WPB failed, Muste believed it affirmed the need for U.S. activists to challenge foreign policy and the nuclear arms race. His vision shaped the Spring Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, uniting diverse groups despite liberal hesitation. Though Muste died before the major 1967 protests, his influence endured. Danielson shows, however, that his legacy faded as the left shifted toward revolutionary models and identity politics. Recovering Muste's story reveals the movement's radical critique of militarism, materialism, and empire, and its efforts toward interracial and transnational solidarity. For Muste, the creative tensions of nonviolence were not failures but necessary struggles, sustained by the belief that "without a vision, the people perish"(p.113)—a vigilance Gandhi also exemplified, setting an enduring example for others, including for our modern civilization, which often becomes trapped in closed systems and rigid ideologies, whether consumerism, Marxist binaries like bourgeoisie and proletariat, or, as is central to the whole volume, the post-truth plagues of our time.

Moving forward, the dialogue between two of modern India's towering figures—Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore—has gained renewed attention in recent times, offering profound insights into the ethical and political challenges of modernity. Chapter 5, *On the Exchanges between Gandhi and Tagore* by Sudipta Kaviraj, is another important contribution to this trend, exploring their rich intellectual engagement and challenging Western political theory's assumption that modernity inevitably leads to a uniform, homogenized world(p.114). Kaviraj argues that the West's own increasing diversity mirrors postcolonial realities, demanding a shift from unidirectional

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intellectual influence to a serious engagement with non-Western thinkers like Gandhi and Tagore, who both critiqued the European nation-state model. He positions them as critical theorists grappling with the possibilities of deep diversity and democratic governance, despite significant philosophical differences: Gandhi's ethical ideal centered on truth (satyagraha) and ascetic discipline, while Tagore envisioned an aesthetic life rooted in beauty and non-possessive engagement with the world. Their debates—on the risks of mass movements (seen in Tagore's fictional critiques of Swadeshi) and on events like the Bihar earthquake (where Gandhi's moral reading clashed with Tagore's rationalist dissent)—illustrate their distinct approaches to divine presence, human freedom, and social justice(pp.121-122). Yet their disagreements never descended into hostility; instead, they modeled a rare form of respectful, mutually enriching dialogue. Kaviraj concludes that their exchange broadens political theory's understanding of diversity, offering ways to navigate the contradictions of modernity without collapsing truth into a single, homogenizing narrative, and enriching ideals of both ethical and aesthetic life(p.134).

Succeeding , Sumathi Ramaswamy in the 6th chapter, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being Mahatma*, examines the paradox of Mahatma Gandhi's lifelong aspiration to reduce himself to "zero" (*sunyata*) through non-possession (*aparigraha*) against the material legacy that persists posthumously(p.135). Despite Gandhi's minimalist ethos and efforts to shed worldly attachments—evident in his writings, ashram life, and rejection of bourgeois comforts—his existence remained entangled with material objects, from spectacles and sandals to spinning wheels and dentures. Ramaswamy highlights the irony that these items, integral to his identity and political work, became relics enshrined in museums and art, contradicting his desire to "pass on without a trace." Ramaswamy further using number of artworks delves into how artists have reimagined Gandhi's possessions as symbols of his legacy, transforming mundane objects into aesthetic and memorial icons. This materialization, Ramaswamy argues, underscores a tension between Gandhi's spiritual ideal of immateriality and the inevitable materiality of his public life, revealing how his legacy is both preserved and commodified(pp142-150). The analysis critiques the dissonance between Gandhi's quest for self-effacement and the monumentalization of his image through statues and memorabilia, reflecting broader themes of memory, power, and the challenges of honoring a figure who sought to transcend materiality.

And then we proceed to one of the most attractive chapters of this volume, focusing on a very rare aspect of Gandhian philosophy—

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his aesthetic dimension. Neelima Shukla-Bhatt in the 7th chapter *A Rasâtmaka Journey: Aesthetics and Moral Fervour in Gandhi «ïl«˚s Quest* examines Mahatma Gandhi's lifelong quest for selflessness through the lens of Indian aesthetic theory, particularly the concept of rasa (aesthetic relishing)(p.174). Bhatt argues that Gandhi's moral and spiritual journey was intrinsically tied to an aesthetic sensibility, framing it as a *rasâtmaka* (essence-of-rasa) journey. This axiological fusion of ethics and aesthetics, she suggests, sustained Gandhi through personal and political turmoil, offering him profound joy even in adversity. The chapter further highlights Gandhi's autobiographical reflections on deriving rasa from his "experiments with truth," linking this to classical Indian theories where aesthetic experience transcends egoistic emotions(p.177). Bhatt connects Gandhi's pursuit of detachment and humility to Abhinavagupta's notion of *úântarasa* (the mood of tranquility). Gandhi's reliance on poetry, such as Urdu poet Nazir's verses recited before his assassination, and devotional music like Mirabai's hymns, further underscores how aesthetic forms provided solace and moral fortitude, becoming integral to his ethical framework. The chapter also explores the tension between Gandhi's minimalist, ascetic aesthetics and his attempt to democratize *úântarasa* for mass mobilization; while symbols like the *charkha* resonated with the marginalized, Tagore's critique—warning against blind obedience and the erosion of individual freedom—reveals the challenges of translating deeply personal spiritual experiences into collective political action. Juxtaposing Gandhi's journey with Abhinavagupta's *úântarasa* and bhakti traditions(p.192), Bhatt innovatively bridges Gandhian ethics with Indian aesthetic philosophy, distinguishing Gandhi's detached rasa from devotional bhakti-rasa centered on divine love, and acknowledging his tragic inability to fully impart this inner transformation to the masses. Ultimately, Bhatt paints Gandhi's life as a *rasâtmaka* epic, blending spiritual austerity, ethical rigor, and aesthetic richness. Bhatt is also of the view that While Gandhi's experiments with truth achieved fleeting moments of unity between beauty and morality, the essay poignantly captures the paradox of his legacy: a deeply personal quest for serenity amid public chaos, whose spiritual-aesthetic core remains elusive for collective replication(p.200).

Chapter 8, *On Sorcery of Peace and Nonviolence: A Note on Gandhi's Yogic Fearlessness and Omnipotent Yoga* by Yohanan Grinshpon, offers a compelling exploration of Gandhi's fearlessness and moral strength through the lens of classical yogic traditions, especially Patañjali's Yoga Sûtra(p.201. Grinshpon argues that Gandhi's unparalleled self-confidence and nonviolent resilience were not solely moral achievements but also the results of deep yogic discipline, particularly

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mastery over fear of death (*abhiniveœa*) and cultivation of transformative energy akin to yogic siddhis(pp.214-25). Although Gandhi publicly dismissed miraculous powers, Grinshpon suggests that his profound impact—such as calming riots or inspiring massive nonviolent movements—echoed the yogic ideal that perfected *ahimsâ* can disarm hostility. Gandhi's celibacy (brahmacarya), breath control, and disciplined detachment shaped not just his inner life but his political methods, functioning as societal austerities (tapas) aimed at collective moral purification. Ultimately, Grinshpon portrays Gandhi as a unique synthesis of ethical activism and yogic adeptness, embodying a "sorcery of peace" that remains elusive in today's fractured world but very much needed(p.219).

In Chapter 9, *Gandhi, the Indian National Congress, and the Jewish*, Vinay Lal explore how Gandhi and the Indian National Congress responded to the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe and the Zionist movement in Palestine during the 1930s and 1940s(p.220). Lal highlights Gandhi's distinction between "spiritual" and "material" Zionism, showing Gandhi's early support for a Jewish spiritual homeland but skepticism toward establishing a Jewish state under British imperial backing. The chapter discusses Gandhi's 1938 Harijan article, where he condemned Nazi atrocities but controversially advised Jews to pursue nonviolent resistance rather than political nationalism. Lal also addresses criticisms from Jewish thinkers like Martin Buber and Judah Magnes and situates Gandhi's views within his deep commitment to nonviolence, limited familiarity with European politics, and personal ties with Jewish individuals such as Hermann Kallenbach(p.226). Ultimately, Lal portrays Gandhi's engagement with the Jewish Question as morally consistent yet politically complex and controversial that create further scope of research.

Chapter 10, *Satyagraha in America—Gandhi, King, and the Politics of Fasting*, is dialogical in nature, as it features James Lawson in conversation with Vinay Lal (edited with an introduction and notes by Lal), discussing the adaptation of Gandhian satyagraha within the American Civil Rights Movement, particularly focusing on the absence of fasting as a public tactic used by Martin Luther King Jr(p.244). Lal introduces Lawson as a crucial figure in the movement, emphasizing his role in training activists like Diane Nash and John Lewis, and notes that Lawson's three years in India—where he engaged deeply with Gandhian thought and leaders like Vinoba Bhave—uniquely positioned him to merge Christian nonviolence with satyagraha(p.246). In the dialogue, Lal raises W. E. B. Du Bois's suggestion that fasting's deep cultural significance in India might not translate easily to America, and Lawson agrees, explaining that while King fasted privately for

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spiritual discipline, public fasting was never adopted as a mass strategy, unlike Gandhi's dramatic fasts in Delhi and Calcutta. Lawson reflects that the American movement was still discovering the full possibilities of nonviolence and already had traditions of boycotts and strikes, independent of Gandhian influence. Their conversation also touches on Cesar Chavez's use of fasting, with Lawson noting that Chavez's practice was more Gandhian in spirit, while Catholic figures like the Berrigan brothers and Dorothy Day also integrated fasting into protest(pp.249-250). They also discuss Andrew Young's observation that King felt fasting would not resonate with the American public and explore cultural differences in the symbolism of food and hunger. Overall, the chapter offers a nuanced understanding of how Gandhian nonviolence was selectively and thoughtfully adapted in the American context, with the strategic omission of public fasting standing out as a significant cultural and tactical shift.

Tridip Suhrud in the 11th chapter *On Being Impervious to the Discreet Charms of M. K. Gandhi* explores the complex and often contradictory relationship between Gandhi and Gujarat, particularly Ahmedabad, where he established his ashram after returning from South Africa(p.264). Gandhi initially chose Gujarat with hopes of reviving handloom weaving, promoting the Gujarati language, and securing financial support from local merchants, but early challenges, including the withdrawal of community support after admitting an "untouchable" family to the ashram, complicated his efforts. The ashram's relocation to a less hospitable site near a crematorium and a jail symbolized Gandhi's uneasy fit within Gujarat's social fabric, even as he became central to the city's political economy by mediating labor disputes. Suhrud highlights the ambivalence of Gujarati intellectuals toward Gandhi, illustrated by his 1919 defeat in the Gujarati Sahitya Parishad election, suggesting that educated Gujaratis were hesitant about Gandhi's literary and political interventions. In 1928, Gandhi transformed the ashram into the Udyog Mandir (Temple of Industry), reflecting his internal struggles with maintaining strict ashram observances, especially around gender equality. Gandhi's ideals, particularly *asteya* (non-stealing) and *aparigraha* (non-acquisitiveness), sharply contrasted with Gujarat's mercantile culture, and his approach to wealth, charity, caste, and labor redefined traditional norms. His interpretation of ahimsa as a political ethic linked love, compassion (*daya*), and self-realization with swaraj (self-rule) and duty, offering a radical vision of social transformation. Eventually, Suhrud argues that while Gandhi profoundly influenced India, his unique interpretation of traditions often met with resistance in his own homeland, making his relationship with Gujarat one of both acceptance and

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alienation(p.287).

The 12th chapter *Exemplary Citizens and the Symbolic Politics of Nonviolent Protest* by Karuna Mantena analyzes the wave of mass protests that swept India in December 2019 following the passage of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)(p.288). Mantena argues that these protests, triggered by a law perceived as an existential threat to Indian Muslims and the secular foundations of Indian citizenship, were remarkable for their spontaneity, spread, and especially their rhetorical strategies. Protesters, particularly students and Muslims who were directly targeted and stigmatized by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its Hindutva ideology, skillfully appropriated symbols of the Indian state—the Constitution and the national flag—to represent an inclusive, alternative nationalism(p.288). The recitation of the Preamble became a powerful act, asserting that Indian identity is founded on secular and egalitarian principles, not religion or ethnicity, while slogans like "Indian by choice, not blood" boldly affirmed belonging against exclusionary narratives. Mantena draws parallels between these protests and historical instances of nonviolent resistance led by M. K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., highlighting how both movements used nonviolent action not just to resist oppression but to enact a more desirable political identity(p.292). Led by Muslim women, the protests displayed dignity and fearlessness to challenge state repression and criminalization of dissent. Drawing on Niebuhr, Mantena shows how nonviolent action, like Gandhi's and King's, counters state narratives by emphasizing discipline and patriotism. She contrasts the government's violent response with the protesters' strategic use of silence and national symbols, arguing that nonviolence's power lies in reshaping political identity and asserting an inclusive vision of Indian nationhood(p.310).

And lastly, Charles R. DiSalvo, in the 13th chapter, *Advocate Gandhi: Race, Role, and Transformation?* explores the complex and controversial issue of Mahatma Gandhi's racism, particularly during his time as a lawyer in South Africa(p.311). While acknowledging the validity of charges of racism against Gandhi, citing his discriminatory statements toward Africans, DiSalvo also seeks to provide a broader context for understanding Gandhi's actions. The chapter highlights Gandhi's 18-year legal career in South Africa, where he mainly represented wealthy Indian merchants and prioritized his clients' interests, sometimes making morally questionable arguments. The Balasundaram case, taken pro bono, is contrasted with the Scheurmann eviction case, where Gandhi acted ruthlessly on behalf of his client. DiSalvo introduces the concept of "role-differentiated behavior," a legal ethic allowing lawyers to separate personal morality from client advocacy, suggesting

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Gandhi's racist remarks should be viewed through this lens(pp.320-321). Specific instances of Gandhi's derogatory distinctions between Indians and Africans are detailed, with DiSalvo acknowledging the pain these statements cause while urging a contextual reading. The chapter expands the critique to include Gandhi's arguments based on class distinctions and procedural tactics that prioritized legal technicalities over moral merit. Central to the chapter is the question of how to reconcile Gandhi's early racism with his later emergence as a global icon of peace and justice. DiSalvo does not excuse Gandhi's racism but instead frames it within his professional role as an advocate and the prevailing social conditions of South Africa at the time, challenging readers to confront the complexities and contradictions of Gandhi's character and legacy(p.332).

Overall, while the volume is excellently edited, meeting all professional standards such as indexing and typesetting—for which we first commend the editor Vinay Lal and all the contributing authors—it could have benefited from the inclusion of an additional bibliography, particularly for sources used in comparative studies. Referencing has been done in a footnote format, which I leave to the reader's preference; however, as current trends suggest, endnotes are now generally more preferred. Now coming to some discussion points with which we aim to provoke the authors and readers for further research : while the book has compellingly explored the axiological, socio-political, and cultural standpoints of Gandhi, with an exception of chapter 2 , it has largely missed addressing the metaphysical foundations that, in fact, greatly influenced his views on Truth and Non-violence. The authors of the volume, with the exception of Mehta, Kaviraj, Neelima Shukla-Bhatt, and Vinay Lal, have somehow overlooked the fact that metaphysical foundations permeate all worldviews—whether materialist or spiritualist, idealist or realist—which weakens the volume's ability to effectively confront the extreme nihilism of the post-truth era, a phenomenon that can, in part, be traced to the rise of anti-foundationalism.

Philosophically speaking, if there are two Indian philosophical traditions that have profoundly shaped Gandhi's thought, they are none other than Advaita Vedanta's absolutism—reflected in his famous dictum "Truth is God," much like the Advaitic notion that "All is Brahman and Brahman is All," i.e., All that exists is ultimately one and not two—and Jainism's *Anekantavada*, the doctrine of manifoldness of truth(Rajan,2024).[3] However, it is to be noted, as studies suggest, that Gandhi did not follow any religion or philosophy in a dogmatic sense; rather, he accepted them only insofar as they succeeded on the parameters of Truth and Non-violence, which could, in fact, be

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considered the litmus test for any idea or thought to be embraced within his worldview. This approach allowed him to refute any alleged contradictions that one might try to highlight in his view of life or way of life. As the following Gandhian expressions suggests:

> I am an advaitist and yet I can support Dvaitism (dualism). The world is changing every moment, and is therefore unreal, it has no permanent existence. But though it is constantly changing, there is something about it which persists, and it is therefore to that extent real. I have therefore no objection to calling it real and unreal, and thus being called an Anekantavadi or a Syadvadi. But my Syadvada is not the syadvada of the learned, it is peculiarly my own […]. The seven blind men who gave seven different descriptions of the elephant were all right from their respective points of view, and wrong from the point of view of one another, and right and wrong from the point of view of the man who knew the elephant. I very much like this doctrine of the manyness of reality (Gandhi 1986: 22).[4]

A number of chapters, such as the 6th, 11th, and 13th, have attempted to highlight certain ironies, contradictions, and imperfections in Gandhian thought; however, they have not thoroughly examined his discussions on the two parameters that also form the title of the volume—Truth and Non-violence. One might be interested in knowing the literal meanings of Truth and Non-violence, but in Gandhi's worldview, these concepts are neither generic nor can they be adequately understood through typical Western ideological or philosophical theories. Yet, despite their profound depth, Gandhi presented them with a simplicity comparable to the alphabets of any language—elementary in form but infinite in meaning and compilations. For instance , as glimpsed in the following remarks of him :

> Socialism and Communism of the West are based on certain conceptions which are fundamentally different from ours. One such conception is their belief in the essential selfishness of human nature. I do not subscribe to it for I know that the essential difference between man and the brute is that the former can respond to the call of the spirit in him, can rise superior to the passions that he owns in common with the brute, and, therefore, superior to selfishness and violence, which belong to the brute nature and not to the immortal spirit of man (Gandhi 1957:270)[5]

And lastly, our discussion point includes responses to the questioning of Gandhian "Mahatmahood," as glimpsed in Chapter 6. How should we understand Gandhi's status as a Mahatma—through strict ascetic rules that reject social engagement and material

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possession, or through his philosophy of life, which categorically affirms Truth and Non-violence as the essential parameters of being human? This can be further explored by noting that when Gandhi claims himself to be an Advaitin, a Sanatani or Jain, he is not advocating withdrawal from life, but rather affirming everyday existence, valuing the suffering of others, and aiming to overcome it through principled means, much like the Lord Buddha. He lived the fact the no one is free until everyone is free as seen in his educational , socio-political and cultural ideas. Gandhi lived and preached the ethics of Puru c ârtha, where Dharma, Artha, and Kâma are all given their due place, especially by guiding Artha and Kâma through Dharma ˇh-«° where Dharma is nothing other than the ideological expression of Ahimsa paramo dharma (nonviolence as the highest duty). As Gandhi is being cited from his autobiography in the chapter 7 by Neelima Shukla- Bhatt :

> …Conquering my passions seems to me even more difficult than defeating the whole world in an armed conflict. Even after coming to India, I have been realizing my hidden passions. I have felt embarrassed; but have not accepted defeat. I have enjoyed rasa in conducting my experiments with Truth, and I am enjoying it even today. But I know that I still have to tread a difficult path. For it, I have to become absolutely egoless [œunyavat lit. 383 ˇh-«° like zero ˇh-«°]. Until a person willingly puts himself last, there is no liberation for him. Ahimsa is the furthermost limit of humility. And it is proven by experience that liberation can never be attained without that humility. Praying for such humility, and urging for the world's support in it, for now, I bring these chapters to a close (p.177).

If one is well-acquainted with the above cited expressions and ideas , one would not so readily question Gandhian Mahatmahood. However, if one is exposed to biased ideologies, whether Marxist or conservative, then even God cannot be spared from critique. Yet this stance becomes self-contradictory, for when we situate Gandhi within the so-called "post-truth" era, we should be careful not to fall prey to its distortions. Gandhi was indeed a Mahatma—but a different kind of Mahatma—one deeply engaged in liberating humanity from its inner and outer confinements and striving to provide the conditions for true Swaraj (self-rule).[6] We shall conclude this review discussion with Vinay Lal's citation of Gandhian expressions in the introduction of this volume, which also resonate with the objectives of our discussion points.

> In my search after Truth I have discarded many ideas and learnt many

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new things. . . . What I am concerned with is my readiness to obey the call of Truth, my god, from moment to moment, and therefore, when anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he still has faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject(p.20).

Notes and References

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